

How are you feeling?

Five months ago, we were living in a pre COVID-19 different world. Since that time the pandemic has stirred up a whirlwind of changes, feelings and emotions. Some have experienced anger, sadness, frustration, guilt, fear, and anxiety to name a few. Many people are processing how they are feeling. Living in the age of coronavirus can have a profound effect on your mood. Remember that symptoms related to stress, anxiety, and depression, include:

- Changes in sleep or inability to sleep (insomnia)
- Unusual sadness or irritability, persisting even when circumstances change
- Loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed
- Changes in weight
- Fatigue and lack of energy
- Changes in appetite – either lack of appetite or stress eating
- Inability to concentrate or focus
- Feeling disconnected and withdrawing from social interaction

Did you know?

1. **Isolation and loneliness fuels depression.** Human beings are social creatures. Being cut off from the love, support, and close contact of family and friends can trigger depression or make existing symptoms worse. Months of social distancing and sheltering at home can leave you feeling isolated and lonely, having to face your problems alone.
2. **A troubled relationship may be even worse than loneliness.** While strong and supportive relationships are crucial for your mental wellbeing, being forced to spend months quarantined in a troubled, unhappy, or abusive relationship can be even more damaging to your mood than being alone.
3. **Anxiety can lead to depression.** All the fear and uncertainty means it's natural to worry. When your worries spiral out of control, though, they can cause panic and anxiety. Since anxiety and depression are believed to stem from the same biological vulnerability, one can often lead to the other.
4. **Stress levels are soaring.** Experiencing a major change in your life, such the death of a loved one, the loss of a job or financial or relationship difficulties, can bring overwhelming levels of stress. As a result of this pandemic, you may be experiencing *several* of these major stressors at once.

Source: HelpGuide.org

COVID-19 Coping Tips

- Be aware of how you are feeling. Many reactions are normal under current circumstances.
- Accept how you are feeling. It may be difficult to accept, but we have little control over much of what is happening around us right now.
- Share and express how you are feeling. Talk to family and friends. Even if it cannot be in person, connect by phone or a virtual visit on a smartphone or iPad.
- Take a break from the news. Allocate time away from the constant barrage coronavirus information. Try journaling, meditation, deep breathing exercises, or reading a book to relax.
- Maintain a healthy diet. Eating nutritious food can help counteract the impact of stress on your body.
- Stay active and exercise regularly. Keep your body moving and mind sharp, and make a point to get outside and spend time in the sun and fresh air.
- Don't forget to identify positive feelings too! Maybe you also feel grateful. Maybe you feel inspired to help. Maybe you feel vindicated as this pandemic has highlighted a lot of existing problems that weren't getting the attention they deserved.

Emotional awareness is a major component of mental health. Understanding how you are feeling, labeling your emotions and using that knowledge to move forward is beneficial. Please see the attached additional handouts that may be helpful.

Note: The UNTHSC Office of Care & Civility provides services to address the health and well-being of faculty and staff: <https://www.unthsc.edu/administrative/human-resource-services/employee-assistance-program/> Care Team line: (817) 735-2740

Sources:

1. Hackensack Meridian Health. COVID-19 Resources and Articles, Accessed online September 18, 2010 at: <https://www.hackensackmeridianhealth.org/category/health-topics/covid19/page/2/>
2. Mental Health America. Your Feelings (About Coronavirus) Are Valid, Accessed online September 18, 2010 at: <https://mhanational.org/blog/your-feelings-about-coronavirus-are-valid>
3. New Social and Emotional Learning Course. Yale University Center for Emotional Intelligence. Accessed online September 18, 2010 at: <https://medicine.yale.edu/news-article/26636/>
4. Moeller, J., Ivcevic, Z., White, A. E., Taylor, C., Menges, J. I., Caruso, D., & Brackett, M. A. (under review). Passion for work: What is it, who has it, and does it matter? Preprint. <https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/xhbu7>
5. Moeller, J., Ivcevic, Z., White, A. E., Menges, J., & Brackett, M. A. (2018). Highly engaged but ready to quit: Intra-individual profiles of engagement and burnout. *Career Development International*. 23(1), 86-105. doi: 10.1108/CDI-12-2016-0215